

Recently, in a phone call with Dave, I read Psalm 1 in Spanish, tapping into his deep memory, underscoring, “El Señor conoce el camino de los justos....” “The Lord knows the way of the just”, telling him how he incarnated these words to me. He and Phyllis were members of that Great American Generation whose greatness was invested into God’s global mission.

We met at 1967 Urbana. Yvonne and I newlyweds, and I on IVCF staff. He was a plenary speaker, relating his Latin America’s experience. I sought him out asking if I could seek his counsel regarding my own future service in Latin America. The friendship began.

In 1970 he invited Yvonne and me to join him in the first IVCF Overseas Training Camp at Roblealto, Costa Rica, and then to assist each summer in Costa Rica and later in Guatemala. Several times in Guatemala we celebrated with him and Phyllis our June wedding anniversaries.

Our friendship sealed during the 1974 Lausanne Congress. Dave, a high Evangelical leader, had a 5-star hotel room. I found a ½ star hotel next to the 24/7 Lausanne rail station; shower on one floor, toilet one above, symbolic breakfast. Astonishingly, Dave moved in with me! Our day off took us to Geneva, visiting the Reformation monument and Calvin’s unmarked grave, lunching on the grounds of Calvin’s Cathedral, sharing a baguette, cheese and a bottle of red wine.

Dave and family had left Latin America to live in Wheaton and lead IV’s mission’s department. We had left Guatemala in 1985 for me to teach at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS). It was a wrenching, hard experience because our kids had not really “lived” in the USA. That fall Yvonne said to me, “Bill, I don’t think Deerfield and TEDS is the place of God’s blessing and protection for our children.” Shattered, my only source of wisdom and guidance was Dave. We three met to process our crisis; he was the only one who truly understood.

He shared his own regrets regarding travel and extended absence from family. His vulnerability was moving, and his wisdom carried us through the difficult waters of leaving TEDS, moving to a small Arkansas town for part time ministry in a small church. His words are forever etched in my mind: “Bill, every decision you make on behalf of your family is one that God himself will bless.” Then, “It really doesn’t matter where you live now, God will open doors for you.” On a Monday in March 1986, lunching together near Wheaton, he said, “Bill, if you leave TEDS this June, then fly to Singapore and meet my friends in the World Evangelical Fellowship.”

That June I was invited to lead the WEF Missions Commission, serving under him. I would serve WEF (now WEA) for three decades. In 1987 Yvonne and I made a round-the-world trip and spent time with Dave and Phyllis in Singapore. We celebrated his WEF assignment conclusion in Manila in 1992. Together we attended the Manila Lausanne Congress and sat together. Over the years since, he has called me regularly and prayed for my family. Shortly after Phyllis died, a couple of his children sent him to visit us in Austin. That Ash Wednesday I imposed ashes on his forehead, pronouncing, "From dust you have come and to dust you shall return". We both wept.

Dave unconditionally loved God, his Word (annually reading his entire Bible), and his family. He cared for me—no, he loved me as I loved him; he mentored me. He was a great storyteller. His sense of humor at times was spicy, though he always would say, "Bill, another one from Tom". He was a vulnerable, honest servant of highest integrity. He loved Phyllis with all of his being, and he told me the other day, "I love Janet with all of my heart".
Dave Howard, a friend and mentor. I honor him. I miss him.

By Bill Taylor

President, TaylorGlobalConsult, Austin, Texas